

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is requested in view of the above amendments and in light of the following remarks and discussion.

Claims 30-38 and 40-54 are amended, and claim 39 is canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Accordingly, claims 30-38 and 40-54 are pending in the application, of which 35-38 and 40-54 are withdrawn from consideration. Support for the changes to the claims is self-evident from the originally filed disclosure, including the original claims, and therefore no new matter is added. See, for example, ¶¶ 58 and Figs. 2-5, and claim 39.

In the Office Action, claims 30-34 are rejected as indefinite, claim 30 is rejected as unpatentable over British Patent GB 889,758 to Williams et al. ("Williams") in view of U.S. Patent 5,772,420 to Holmes ("Holmes"), and claims 31-34 are rejected as unpatentable over Williams in view of Holmes, and further in view of British Patent GB 808,739 to Crook ("Crook"). It is requested that the rejections be withdrawn, and that the claims be allowed, for at least the following reasons.

As an initial matter, it is submitted that the restriction requirement in the Office Action dated September 23, 2008 is improper even under the standard set forth by PCT § 13.1. The Office Action alleges that groups I (claims 30-53) and II (claim 54) do not form a single general inventive concept under PCT § 13.1. Page 2. However, independent claim 30 recites "a support arrangement," and independent claim 54 recites "a method of supporting" that includes substantially all of the same features as the support arrangement of claim 30. Accordingly, the independent claims are both drawn to the same general inventive concept. In addition, rather than introduce

additional inventive concepts, the dependent claims merely further define the elements of the same general inventive concept set forth by the independent claims. See MPEP § 1850. Thus, it is submitted that the restriction requirement is improper and should be withdrawn, and that claims 35-38 and 40-54 should be Examined along with claims 30-34.

With respect to the indefiniteness rejection, it is submitted that the foregoing claim amendments render claims 30-34 clear and definite. In particular, the recitations of “generally cylindrical” and “generally vertically” have been removed from the claims, and the various antecedent basis issues have been addressed. Accordingly, withdrawal of the indefiniteness rejection is requested.

With respect to the obviousness rejections, independent claim 30, as amended, recites a support arrangement comprising, among other features,

a single vertical support . . . including . . . upper and lower support members which are centrally positioned about the axis and are displaceable relative to one another, the upper and lower support members defining respectively downwardly and upwardly disposed contact surfaces through which the vertical loads are transmitted . . . [and]

lateral support means . . . including a plurality of circumferentially spaced upper lateral supports configured to provide lateral support to the core barrel at or towards an upper end thereof

It is submitted that Williams, Holmes, and Crook, taken alone or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest at least these claimed features.

Williams discloses a “core structure . . . mounted within a pressure vessel 11 on a support grid 12 which is in turn supported from the reactor foundations 13 through a cylindrical skirt 14.” Col. 2, ll. 47-52. In Williams, “[t]he support grid is provided with

rigid radial key members 15, spaced around its periphery, which project from a heavy ring member 16 forming part of the support grid. Each key member is arranged to slide between opposed bearing pads 17 mounted on the inside of pockets 18 formed in the pressure vessel.” Col. 2, ll. 54-61.

The Office Action seems to assert that the upper and lower ends of Williams’ cylindrical skirt correspond to the claimed single vertical support. Page 4. As shown in Fig. 2 of Williams, however, the cylindrical skirt constitutes a single base of integral construction (i.e., a single component) that supports the grid from the reactor foundation. Thus, Williams’ cylindrical skirt cannot provide the claimed “upper and lower support members . . . defining respectively downwardly and upwardly disposed contact surfaces” (emphasis added), as it is only a single “piece.”

Notwithstanding this distinction over Williams, the ends of Williams’ cylindrical skirt also are not “displaceable relative to one another,” as recited by amended independent claim 30. The Office Action seems to assert that the ends of Williams’ cylindrical skirt are relatively displaceable “given a sufficiently strong displacement force.” Page 4. It is noted that while anything is displaceable given enough force, the ends of Williams’ cylindrical skirt are not displaceable under any normal circumstances. Applicant’s specification teaches that allowing the upper and lower support members to be displaceable relative to one another accommodates the differences in “the rates and extent of the expansion of the core barrel and the reactor pressure vessel” caused by “differences in temperature as well as the materials used.” ¶ 68. The ends of Williams’ cylindrical skirt are not displaceable under these circumstances or any other normal operating conditions.

The Office Action also seems to assert that the key members 15 of Williams correspond to the claimed lateral support means. Page 4. While the key members 15 may provide some lateral support to the vessel 11, Fig. 1 of Williams shows the key members 15 are positioned toward the bottom of vessel 11. In contrast, amended claim 30 recites “lateral support means . . . including a plurality of circumferentially spaced upper lateral supports configured to provide lateral support to the core barrel at or towards an upper end thereof . . .” (emphasis added).

Holmes fails to remedy these deficiencies of Williams. Holmes discloses “a greaseless mold carrier and alignment system includ[ing] a tie rod bracket on each of a pair of lower tie rods of an injection molding machine.” Abstract. Holmes, however, fails to disclose or suggest the claimed single vertical support and lateral support means recited by amended independent claim 30.

Crook fails to remedy the deficiencies of Williams and Holmes. Crook discloses a support for “heavy cylindrical or spherical vessels subject to large temperature rises . . . [causing] their radial or axial dimensions [to] change materially.” Col. 3, ll. 8-13. In Crook, “the load supports, each incorporating a load-supporting strut which is angularly movable under the influence of the dimensional change of the vessel, will be arranged circumferentially of the vessel . . . [such that] as expansion of the vessel takes place, the load-supporting struts will move angularly about the vertical.” Col. 3, ll. 20-28. Crook however, fails to disclose or suggest the claimed single vertical support and lateral support means recited by amended independent claim 30.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection and the allowance of independent claim 30 is respectfully requested. While of different scope than independent claim 30,

amended independent claim 54 (withdrawn) is allowable over the prior art for at least similar reasons as independent claim 30. The remaining claims are allowable at least due to their dependence from independent claim 30, as well as for their own features.

The remaining claims presented for consideration are allowable over the prior art at least because of their dependence from independent claim 30, as well as for their own features.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would be useful in resolving any outstanding issues, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned at 202.216.5118.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: 

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